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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE STUDENTS

IN THE

INDIANA MEDICAL COLLEGE,

BY

A. B. SHIPMAN, M. D.,

PROF. OF SURGERY IN INDIANA MED. COLLEGE.

SESSION 1849 '50.

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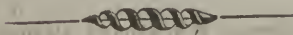
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we discover such striking evidence of harmonious design; such ample proof of a great first cause, which makes so many devotees at her altars.

It is the most unselfish of studies. It savors least of the gold and dross of mammon, and is therefore the farthest removed from the busy haunts of traffic and commerce.

I propose in this Lecture to take a short and cursory view of some of the various occupations which are followed by the children of earth, as a means of support, and in the accumulation of wealth, fame, honor and distinction.

The three Professions, of Theology, Law, and Medicine, I propose first to speak of; because they seem to bear a kindred relation to each other, in various respects. Not that I deem them more honorable, or respectable than many other employments. It is the manner of cultivating an occupation, that renders it either honorable or profitable.

"Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

is a line that contains as much truth as poetry.

In choosing one or the other of these professions, various circumstances generally influence the individual. A predilection, or a taste for one or the other, generally settles the question. The advice of friends; the wishes of parents and guardians, or the conveniences of acquiring the study and various things of a kindred nature, point out to the young aspirant, the path he is to travel.

It is not for a moment to be supposed, that each one takes the best and most appropriate profession which he studies.

Many we find struggling on through life, toiling as it were, up the steep and rugged way, beset with difficulties at every step, unsatisfying and unsatisfied; and finally, late in life, making the grand discovery that they have been, all their lives, following a course least of all suited to their temperament, taste, and self-interest. It behooves one, therefore, to make it a matter of serious self-examination, in the choice of an occupation, which the individual is to honor, or receive distinction and wealth, in return for the glory he sheds on the profession of his adoption.

The error committed in the choice, is one cause of the many failures experienced in starting in life. To retrieve this false step, many forsake their first love, and choose the one inclination dictates. But few have become eminent in more than one pursuit. Life is too short, and the growth of true fame a tree of so slow and gradual growth, that,

like the Aloe, it blooms not until it has numbered its century of years. A few men of extraordinary genius, have become famous in various professions, and departments of life; yet their rise and progress was more like the fitful meteor, or the erratic comet, than the glowing sun of true and substantial fame.

We frequently hear this occupation and that employment cited as being more lucrative, or laborious, or honorable, or respectable, than others; but the truth is, the *manner* of cultivating or following it out, alone makes the difference.

The Clergyman has it in his power to make the sacred calling one of the most glorious and Heaven-born of occupations. His mission is that of all others, best calculated to give peace and quiet to the troubled soul in times of calamity and affliction—to pour into the wounded breast the balm of comfort and consolation; to still the fears of the trembling soul, on the verge of eternity, and point with the finger of faith, the way to the mansions of endless day. And then the glorious examples in view of those who have honored their lives and their Divine calling, ought, and no doubt have, acted as incentives to a lofty and transcendent virtue. What more glorious, than to attempt, humbly and meekly, to imitate the life of the Redeemer of mankind? his blameless youth; his charitably virtuous manhood; his sublime, example and death. These are abundant inducements to follow, though far behind, what mortal can ever fully attain. And then those holy men, the Apostles, with their master's life and works illuminating and cheering them on, though their lives, like that of their great example, should end in a dungeon, a scourge or a Crucifixion.

The Clergyman who fearlessly and conscientiously pursues the line of his duty, has no easy pastime, no flowery pathway; no thornless pillow, for his weary head. The sneers of a wicked world; the cold neglect of society, who fail to appreciate his worth and talents; the sordid pittance often doled out from the hand of griping avarice, while the cares and support of a growing family, dependent on him alone for support; the uncharitable construction of his words; the bitter fanaticism, or the cold sneer of infidelity, too often wound his sensitive feelings. These are a few of the trials which the good Clergyman has to endure; and was this earth alone, and the rewards he receives here, all the recompense he obtains, poor indeed would be his compensation. But religion, and a conscious feeling of duty, buoys him up, above the

trials and afflictions of the world; and though all around is storm and tempest, his anchor is firm and fixed as a rock in the ocean

"As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

The Lawyer is obliged to spend years of hard and expensive study before he can fit and prepare himself to become useful to himself and family; and though he has toiled late and early, the harvest which he has expected to reap, as the fruit of his industry, is slow in ripening, and many times has been blighted ere he can gather it in. Often times after finishing his education ere he is prepared to enter on the business of life, some Colossus in the profession overshadows him with a hopeless competition, or some impudent pettifogger, disgusts him with his shameless knavery, until he is almost persuaded to throw up his profession in disgust. He sees imposture and knavery thrive and grow fat around him, while moral worth and principle starves; and it is after long years of patient and untiring industry, that his ambition meets its reward. Few men unacquainted with Lawyers, know of the thousand petty annoyances, and troubles they have to encounter. They could not, if they would always choose the right side of a cause. Duty, interest, and the stern demands of inflexible justice, often compel them to shield and defend with their learning and eloquence, a cause of questionable right.

They are frequently deceived, misled and perplexed by their clients' want of integrity and principle. And when conscious of truth and justice on their side, the decision must finally be subject to the imperfections of human understanding; often indeed to prejudiced Judges and Jurors. No class of men feel more keenly, the "glorious uncertainty of the law," excepting their unfortunate clients.

If they remain a long time '*briefless*,' as the younger members frequently do, poverty stares them in the face at every turn. If eminent and successful, mental fatigue, the wear and tear of body and brain, compelled to forego the calm and tranquil enjoyment of domestic life, and the protracted absence from home, at a time when a growing family most require attention.

These are only a few of the perplexities and troubles which annoy and harrass this class of men, who are looked upon by a large portion of society as earning their money, and living without a corresponding exertion.

Many of them enter on the stormy sea of politics, but the life of a public officer is not that which is to be envied, however high a position he may attain. Few can appreciate the bitter feeling which has cost him his election. The seathing denunciation of party strife, the forfeiture of private and personal friendship, the assassin-like stabs from hireling party presses, and even the ruthless invasion of his domestic life, are poor and paltry compensation for all this train of annoyances. Nothing but a conscious rectitude of purpose, and a pure and lofty patriotism can sustain one under such trying circumstances.

But Gentlemen, from a long and intimate acquaintance with many gentlemen of the legal profession, I am disposed to believe they earn their money, as a general thing, with as much fatigue and trouble, as most others, and in moral honesty, will compare favorably with their brethren of the other professions.

A bad man will remain so, in whatever situation in life you may place him. Some employments it is true, offer facilities for dishonesty and corruption more than others. A thief, if he has the opportunity, will thrust his hand into the public treasury; His friends may call it *defalcation*; but an honest man will guard that treasury as though it was a sacred trust. The hypocrite may find his way into the church; he may even preach the gospel with great fervor and zeal. "He may steal the livery of Heaven to serve the Devil in," and may ever cover the cloven foot for a time with the length of his priestly robes, yet sooner or later he will be stripped and stand exposed a mass of corruption; a "whited sepulchre."

It does not follow that because there are demagogues and speculators, that the great mass of political men are dishonest, any more than a few hypocrites in religion destroy the truths of Revelation.

If Quackery prevails in our profession, we are not alone. Law and Divinity have their counterfeits and impostors; and so far from feeling irritated and annoyed, and disgusted, let us rather consider it complimentary that imitators *try* to copy and assume, though it is in an imperfect and ridiculous manner. Gold is not the less valuable because it is sometimes counterfeited; or the diamond, the most priceless of gems, held in less esteem because glass and pebbles are often called by its name. True genuine science and worth, will ever stand at the head of every branch of human occupation, as gold and silver are at the head of, and represent the standard, capital and riches of the land.

Of the advantages which the profession of Medicine offers over that of Law and Theology, depends mainly on the fitness and adaptation of the individual.

A strong and enthusiastic love of the Natural Sciences, will generally mark one as a successful student of Medicine. That love of nature will show itself in a cultivation of Natural Philosophy, a fondness of investigation of the phenomena of life, under all forms and circumstances. A disposition to search for truth in hidden and obscure subjects. A love of Chemistry is generally found in those who have the most ardent attachment to medical science. Almost every Naturalist of any distinction is, or has become a Physician.

There is one thing which I have observed with admiration; it is that a Physician in whatever situation you may place him, that ardent *love* for his profession, is the ruling passion of his life. He may turn aside for a while, for what he may deem a better, and easier, or more lucrative employment. He may enter the political arena, and plunge in the whirl and excitement of public or official life, but sooner or later, he is glad to tread his old and familiar paths, to moor his shattered and storm-beaten bark in the peaceful and quiet haven of professional and domestic life.

A good and conscientious Physician, has more sources of consolation in the turmoil of life, than the world is aware of; for conscious of his strength and the integrity of his purposes, let the whirlwind and the roar of elemental strife surround him, yet calm in the righteousness of his principles, he is as unmoved as the eternal hills. What is the courage of the soldier compared to his? Led on by the soul-stirring clang of martial music, he marches up to the slumbering battery, or charges the bristling square. The smoke of battle stirs his blood; the sight of carnage rouses higher his animal hate. It is brute force, such as the lion, the tiger and the panther have, in pursuit of blood—or such as the female of the brute creation have in defence of their offspring.

All this is mere animal courage, stimulated by the force of circumstances. But the conflict is over, the battle is lost or won, the brave soldier is a mere man, the infuriated animal is quieted and harmless.

Now compare the moral bravery of the Physician. It is a time of fearful pestilence. Over the City the Angel of death is hovering—The avenger is throwing his unseen but fatal darts, here, there, and everywhere. On the door of almost every mansion, the sable token of death

is hung. The rumble of the midnight hearse breaks solemnly on the ear of the lone watcher by the couch of the dying. The hasty rattle of the Physician's carriage is constantly heard as he hurries from one house of sorrow to another. Anxious faces are hurrying out of town to escape the unseen foe. Places of business and pleasure are deserted; wives are entreating their husbands to fly with them to the woods, the fields and the country; anywhere but in the reeking City.

But who are those who walk about calm and collected; firm, yet fearless, while all around are anxious and terrified? They are the good Physicians who remain as ministering spirits, unharmed, as though they bore "*charmed lives*."

But the secret of their exemption is in understanding the laws of life and death. They know that *fear* invites the fatal shafts; and that a calm and collected mind renders the body invulnerable to the attacks of epidemical disease. They call to their aid, the light of science; and it proves adequate to protect; they take no medicine to ward off attacks; they observe only the simple laws of nature, and they escape unharmed.

But how is it with the flying throng, hurrying away from the destroyer? By the way-side, in the forest and field, on the mountain's top, by the shore of lake and river, in the farm house, in the cottage, and the stately mansion; in the ship with sails set or flying with wind and tide, on the panting steamer, and on the car that with arrowy speed, is hastening from danger. The stricken one is soon overtaken by the dire avenger, his fears and his flight soliciting his destruction.

It is this moral courage, above every other thing, which stamps the Physician as a superior being, in times of pestilence and National calamity. Without reverting to ancient times to seek for examples of this transcendent heroism in seasons of pestilence and death, the annals of our science is filled with the deeds of daring and self-sacrificing instances that would strip the laurel from the brow of the most fearless warrior that ever desolated the earth.

The fearful pestilence that has recently scourged our land, and carried mourning and lamentation into the thousand happy circles, and literally hung the land with a sable pall, has brought forth individual traits of heroism that we may well be proud of.

A City filled with happy inhabitants, may lie down to a night of re-

pose—the morn is ushered in by a sky of cloudless beauty—the air is bland, and to all appearances, laden with health and happiness—the thronging streets are alive with the gay, the beautiful and the healthy. At eve, from the squalid abodes of vice and poverty, goes up the wail of the mourner, mingled with the hoarse death whisper of the pestilence stricken. Soon the foe spreads over the whole town—the dweller in the luxurious mansion is seized, and the reign of terror and consternation is complete. Then forth from every avenue pours out the rushing throng until the City is half depopulated. But it is rare indeed I am proud to say, that the worthy Physician is among the hurrying throng. He is at his post, calm and collected. Where the shafts fly thickest, there he is to be found. Where the breach is weakest, he throws himself into the gap. He may be stricken; he may be compelled to succumb, but flies he never—Never turns his back on the enemy.

It is this moral heroism in times of pestilence, which endears him to society—Which extorts the meed of praise, so generally withheld, to the deserving of our profession.

The real value of the good Physician has been strikingly tested within the last year, while Quackery has sunk correspondingly low. It is in diseases of real malignancy, like Asiatic Cholera, where a true comparison alone can be instituted, of the value of remedial agents. In several chronic, and a host of nervous and imaginary maladies, the Quack gains his eclat and his money.

In a vast proportion of these cases, it matters not whether the deluded patient swallows the ten-millionth part of a grain of sugar of milk or moonshine, or takes his cure from the mysterious passes of the Mesmerizer. All that is required is, that his credulity be capacious, or small enough to receive the proper impression. If a strong appeal is made to the fancy, or the imagination made the vehicle to carry the cure into the system, why that is all which is required. But in all diseases of *real* severity, you might as well stop a hurricane with a silk handkerchief, or extinguish Vesuvius with a fire engine. Quacks may as well strike their colors to all acute diseases; it is not their field. Some few of them have shrewdness enough to know the fact, but the great majority of them are too ignorant to know this all important truth.

Allow me, gentlemen, to congratulate ourselves on the glorious age in which we live. On the astonishing improvements that have taken place, within a short time, in medical and surgical science. It is but

about two years since, that I read an article to a class of Medical Students here, on an invention in Boston, to do away with the pain of a surgical operation. Yes, gentlemen, it is less than two years since that time; and so rapid is the advance of science; so thronging on each other is invention after invention, that now we regard it as a piece of stale news. It has been put in practice over the whole civilized earth, in the short period of two years. Steam and lightning have scattered it over the world, with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of improvements. The fabled waters of Lethe have been realized; and although the elixir, has not yet been found, which confers immortal youth and health on mankind, yet the exemption from pain, in all necessary surgical operations, is but little less valuable than that long sought for Panacea. The amount of human suffering, and misery, and anguish, which this one discovery has saved within two years, is beyond all estimation. And what it is destined to do, with all the reasonable improvements, in time to come, is inestimable and incalculable. And the sum total of *life* which it has actually saved, is greater, in my opinion, than from any other improvement, since the discovery of the Immortal Jenner.

And yet we hear many condemning this discovery, as being unsafe and dangerous. This is true, to a certain extent. So are nearly all other powerful and useful agents, unless under certain circumstances. Opium, for instance, is a highly dangerous substance to administer improperly, notwithstanding its almost divine powers. So is alcohol; and even cold water, the universal beverage. A person predisposed to apoplexy, drinks half a pint of brandy, or takes a full dose of opium—he dies—but does it reasonably follow that brandy and opium are to be prohibited? An individual drinks a glass of ice-water, when the body is heated—he falls down and dies—does it follow that no more ice-water shall be drank? A man in attempting to swallow a piece of beef, has it lodge in the glottis—he suffocates at once—shall no more beef be eaten? The blandest the mildest article in the world, under certain circumstances, is capable of doing much mischief.

Rather than condemn a medicine, let us study its adaptation to disease; correcting its dangerous and unpleasant tendencies; developing its powers and properties, and its capabilities. Electricity is a case in point. No one for a moment but allows that this agent is essential to life and motion; yet it instantly annihilates life and motion by its

improper application. Caloric, is an essential element in all animal bodies, yet animal life is quickly extinguished by an excess of this same property.

The use of anæsthetic agents frequently renders it safe to operate when death might follow the shock to the system. It renders a patient more willing to submit to an operation, than otherwise.

Within two years I have used Ether or Chloroform, in more than eighty cases, mostly for the performance of dangerous and painful operations, and not one out of the whole number, have died, or been in the least injured, and I have had good reason to know that many of that number would have fallen victims, had it not been for the administration of this valuable agent. In the case of a young gentleman who had *tetanus* or lock jaw, from a wound; he was on the point of dying, and that, too, one of the most painful deaths that can be well conceived, when chloroform was administered, and lo! as if by magic, the horrible spasms relaxed, the distorted limbs and body came back to their proper places, and he was cured, by this and this alone, when all other remedies had been tried in vain.

I am not one of those sanguine individuals, who believe that every case of *tetanus* can be cured by these agents; but this much do I believe; that *nearly* all can if properly employed. That most terrific of all complaints, the *rabies canina*, or hydrophobia, is said to have been cured, in one well authenticated case.

Anæsthesia is yet in its infancy. Of the prospective benefit to be derived from its employment, the most sanguine results are to be apprehended. Diseases that cannot be cured, will be mitigated by its use. And even the pains of dissolution will be soothed and softened by what no other means can bring about. Life is rendered vastly more desirable, as well as having it prolonged by this class of agents. Insurance companies can afford to issue policies at lower rates, and with less risks, within a few years, than formerly; and as an evidence of the confidence they repose in legitimate medicine and surgery, one of the questions asked the applicant is, whether he employs a regular medical man as his physician. This small matter is more complimentary to the profession, than one at first sight might be disposed to admit.

While our own profession has been striding onward with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of science, we must acknowledge that all

other branches of science and art are whirling on with a speed truly astonishing.

It is less than a year since, that we began to read of the golden treasures of California, and lo! a mighty army of men have crossed the continent, and are founding a city on the shores of the Pacific, which will, in our day, be a great commercial emporium, filled with the canvas of every enterprising nation on the globe; and soon the panting of the Locomotive will frighten the wild horses and buffalo, on the great Western Prairies, and echo through the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, and on through the snowy passes, until the broad Pacific shall gleam on the eye of the traveller, as he beholds the setting sun sink into the bosom of this illimitable ocean.

In a short time we shall be able to transmit messages across the continent, from ocean to ocean, with a speed that will outstrip the Sun, in his fiery course.

It is but a few years since these prairies, and these lands were in the Far West. Now they are East of a vast tract which has been reclaimed from savage man and beast. Soon a sovereign State will be organized in the great Desert Basin of the Salt Lake, and Representatives to Congress are now on their way to the seat of our National Government. And the time is near at hand, when we shall have Senators and members of the House of Representatives claiming their mileage fee from the Bay of San Francisco, from the golden sands of the Sacramento, and from the banks of the Columbia. Many of you gentlemen, will visit those distant lands, brought home to our doors, by the magic power of steam and Electricity.

Colleges will be founded, magnificent capitals will grow up; the hum and buzz of machinery will enliven the water courses; the quiet hamlet, the fields of waving grain, with the cattle upon a thousand hills, shall present such a picture of loveliness and beauty, as to realize in truth, literally, the Golden Age.

What a glorious destiny awaits this nation! And you, my friends, are to be the actors in the great drama that is enacting before us.— Though you are to walk in the quiet and tranquil paths of literature and science, yet the impress of your *acts*, and your conduct, will flow down the stream of time, for good or for evil, to the latest generations,

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